



Program Guidebook

Master of Science, Educational Leadership

The Master of Science in Educational Leadership is a competency-based degree program that prepares students at the graduate level to become licensed as school principals. The program's philosophy is based on that of the school principal as the school's instructional team leader. Work in this degree program takes place in a case study format and utilizes a case study school site or district. Students also complete a practicum working closely with a school administrator in a practicum school site. Practicum activities take place at both the elementary (K-6) and secondary (7-12) levels and occur during the concluding term of the program. All students complete a capstone project in which they design and implement data-driven school improvement initiatives based on the results of their case studies and practicum. The program is aligned to the ELCC 2011 standards.

Understanding the Competency-Based Approach

Practically speaking, what does it mean when we say that WGU's programs are competency-based? Unlike traditional universities, WGU does not award degrees based on credit hours or on a certain set of required courses. Instead, you will earn your degree by demonstrating your skills, knowledge, and understanding of important concepts through a series of carefully designed courses.

Progress through your degree program is governed not by classes but by satisfactory completion of the required courses that demonstrate your mastery of the competencies. Of course, you will need to engage in learning experiences as you brush up on competencies or develop knowledge and skills in areas in which you may be weak. For this learning and development, WGU has a rich array of learning resources in which you may engage under the direction of your student mentor. You will work closely with your mentor to schedule your program for completing the courses. You will also work closely with additional faculty members as you proceed through courses of study that are designed to lead you through the content you must master in order to pass the assessment(s) for each course.

The benefit of this competency-based system is that it makes it possible for people who are knowledgeable about a particular subject to make accelerated progress toward completing a WGU degree, even if they lack college experience. You may have gained skills and knowledge of a subject while on the job, accumulated wisdom through years of life experience, or, indeed, taken a course on a particular subject. WGU will award your degree based on the skills and knowledge that you possess and can demonstrate—not the number of credits hours on your transcript.

Accreditation

Western Governors University is the only university in the history of American higher education to have earned accreditation from four regional accrediting commissions. WGU's accreditation was awarded by (1) the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, (2) the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, (3) the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and (4) the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The university's accreditation status is now managed by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). The WGU Teachers College is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The nursing programs are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). The Health Informatics program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM).

The Degree Plan

The focus of your program is your personalized Degree Plan. The Degree Plan is a detailed blueprint of the courses you will need to complete in order to earn your degree. The Degree Plan also lays out the accompanying learning resources and assessments that compose your program. The list of courses in the Degree Plan is often referred to as the standard path. The amount of time it takes to complete your program depends on both the amount of new information you need to learn and the amount of time you plan to devote each week to study.

Students will vary widely in the specific skills and information they need to learn. For example, some students may be highly knowledgeable in a particular subject matter and would not need to engage in new learning opportunities. Other students may find that portions of the program require them to learn new information and that they may need to take an online class or participate in a study module to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to pass the program competencies in that area. Some individuals may be able to devote as little as 15–20 hours per week to the program, while others may need to devote more time. For this reason, you will complete preassessments to help your mentor form a profile of your prior knowledge and experience for use in creating your personalized Degree Plan.

WGU's Mentoring Approach

The mentoring approach is a powerful component of the WGU educational experience. When you enroll at WGU, you will begin interacting with your student mentor, course mentors, and other support staff. Your student mentor will meet with you on a regular basis and take an active role and a personal interest in your success. Your student mentor will be your point of contact throughout your program and will be available to communicate with you via e-mail or phone. Your mentor will help you set weekly study goals, guide you to learning materials, help you understand what to expect in courses, and motivate you to work hard to complete your program. When you have questions or concerns, your mentor will help you resolve them.

As you work on each course, you will also be assigned course mentors. These course mentors are content experts who can discuss your learning for the course, help you find answers to content questions, and help you navigate the course successfully. Your course mentors are available to meet with you individually to provide personal support. You can also communicate with them by posting in the online learning community and participating in live discussion sessions such as webinars and cohorts.

Working closely with your own personal mentoring team will help you engage in the learning process and be a successful student while at WGU.

Connecting with Other Mentors and Fellow Students

As you proceed through your Degree Plan, you will have direct contact with multiple faculty members. These communications can take a variety of forms, including participation in one-on-one discussions, chats in the learning communities, and live cohort and webinar opportunities. As a WGU student, you will have access to your own personal myWGU Student Portal, which will provide a gateway to your courses of study, learning resources, and learning communities where you will have interactions with faculty and other students.

The resources in each course are specifically designed to support you as you develop competencies in preparation for your assessments through the utilization of reading materials, videos, tutorials, cohort opportunities, community discussions, and live discussions that are guided by content experts. You will access your program community during your orientation course to network with peers who are enrolled in your program and to receive continued support through professional enrichment and program-specific chats, blogs, and discussions. WGU also provides Student Services Associates to help you and your mentor solve any special problems that may arise.

Orientation

The WGU orientation course focuses on acquainting you with WGU's competency-based model, distance education, technology, and other resources and tools available for students. You will also utilize WGU program and course communities, participate in activities, and get to know other students at WGU. The orientation course must be completed before you can start your first term at WGU.

Transferability of Prior College Coursework

Because WGU is a competency-based institution, it does not award degrees based on credits but rather on demonstration of competency. However, if you have completed college coursework at another accredited institution, or if you have completed industry certifications, you may have your transcripts and certifications evaluated to determine if you are eligible to receive some transfer credit. The guidelines for determining what credits will be granted varies based on the degree program. Students entering graduate programs must have their undergraduate degree verified before being admitted to WGU. To review more information in regards to transfer guidelines based on the different degree programs, you may visit the Student Handbook found at the link below and search for "Transfer Credit Evaluation." Within the Teachers College, there may be additional courses to meet state requirements.

[Click here for the Student Handbook](#)

WGU does not waive any requirements based on a student's professional experience and does not perform a "résumé review" or "portfolio review" that will automatically waive any degree requirements. Degree requirements and transferability rules are subject to change in order to keep the degree content relevant and current.

Remember, WGU's competency-based approach lets you take advantage of your knowledge and skills, regardless of how you obtained them. Even when you do not directly receive credit, the knowledge you possess may help you accelerate the time it takes to complete your degree program.

Continuous Enrollment, On Time Progress, and Satisfactory Academic Progress

WGU is a "continuous enrollment" institution, which means you will be automatically enrolled in each of your new terms while you are at WGU. Each term is six months long. Longer terms and continuous enrollment allow you to focus on your studies without the hassle of unnatural breaks between terms that you would experience at a more traditional university. At the end of every six-month term, you and your student mentor will review the progress you have made and revise your Degree Plan for your next six-month term.

WGU requires that students make measurable progress toward the completion of their degree programs every term. We call this "On-Time Progress," denoting that you are on track and making progress toward on-time graduation. As full-time students, graduate students must enroll in at least eight (8) competency units each term, and undergraduate students must enroll in at least twelve (12) competency units each term. Completing at least these minimum enrollments is essential to On-Time Progress and serves as a baseline from which you may accelerate your program. We measure your progress based on the courses you are able to pass, not on your accumulation of credit hours or course grades. Every time you pass a course you are demonstrating that you have mastered skills and knowledge in your degree program. For comparison to traditional grading systems, passing a course means you have

demonstrated competency equivalent to a “B” grade or better.

WGU assigns competency units to each course in order to track your progress through the program. A competency unit is equivalent to one semester credit of learning. Some courses may be assigned 3 competency units while others may be as large as 12 competency units.

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) is particularly important to students on financial aid because you must achieve SAP in order to maintain eligibility for financial aid. We will measure your SAP quantitatively by reviewing the number of competency units you have completed each term. In order to remain in good academic standing, you must complete at least 66.67% of the units you attempt over the length of your program—including any courses you add to your term to accelerate your progress. Additionally, during your first term at WGU you must pass at least 3 competency units in order to remain eligible for financial aid. We know that SAP is complex, so please contact a financial aid counselor should you have additional questions. *Please note: The Endorsement Preparation Program in Educational Leadership is not eligible for federal financial aid.

Courses

Your Degree Plan includes courses needed to complete your program. To obtain your degree, you will be required to demonstrate your skills and knowledge by completing the assessment(s) for each course. In general there are two types of assessments: performance assessments and objective assessments. Performance assessments contain, in most cases, multiple scored tasks such as projects, essays, and research papers. Objective assessments include multiple-choice items, multiple-selection items, matching, short answer, drag-and-drop, and point-and-click item types, as well as case study and video-based items. Certifications verified through third parties may also be included in your program. More detailed information about each assessment is provided in each course of study.

External Content & Basic Skills Exams

Western Governors University requires that candidates pass the state-mandated content exam that aligns with their WGU program in addition to a basic skills exam (initial licensure programs only). Specific information regarding required content and basic skills exams required for each program and state can be found in the WGU Student Handbook. In many cases, it is the candidates’ responsibility to register and pay for the required exams and submit their official passing score reports to WGU.

State Licensure Requirements

Many states have specific licensure requirements that are not part of WGU programs that you will have to fulfill in addition to the degree requirements of your program. These state licensure requirements might include, but are not limited to: subject-specific licensure exams, state-specific teacher performance assessments, course work related to state history, basic skills exams, and background clearances. The WGU Student Handbook outlines the credentialing requirements of each state. Teacher candidates should consult the applicable section to become familiar with their state’s expectations regarding licensure.

Learning Resources

You will work with your mentor to select the various learning resources needed to prepare for the assessments in each course. In most cases, the learning materials you will use are independent learning resources such as textbooks, e-learning modules, study guides, simulations, virtual labs, and tutorials. WGU works with dozens of educational providers, including enterprises, publishers, training companies, and higher educational institutions to give you high-quality and effective instruction that matches the competencies that you are developing. The cost of most learning resources is included in your tuition, and you can enroll directly in those through your Degree Plan as your mentor has scheduled them. Some resources are not covered by your tuition, and you will need to cover those costs separately. WGU has excellent bookstore and library arrangements to help you obtain the needed learning resources.

Standard Path

As previously mentioned, competency units (CUs) have been assigned to each course in order to measure your academic progress. If you are an undergraduate student, you will be expected to enroll in a minimum of 12 competency units each term. Graduate students are expected to enroll in a minimum of 8 competency units each term. A standard plan for a student for this program who entered WGU without any transfer units would look similar to the one on the following page. Your personal progress can be faster, but your pace will be determined by the extent of your transfer units, your time commitment, and your determination to proceed at a faster rate.

Standard Path *for* Master of Science, Educational Leadership

Course Description	CUs	Term
Governance, Finance, Law, and Leadership for Principals	6	1
Performance Excellence Criteria for Educational Leaders	4	1
Strategic Planning for Educational Leaders	2	2
Student, Stakeholder, and Market Focus for Educational Leaders	5	2
Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management for Educational Leaders	4	2
Workforce Focus for Educational Leaders	4	3
Process Management for Educational Leaders	3	3
Comprehensive Educational Leadership Integration	2	3
Practicum in Educational Leadership	7	4
Capstone Written Project in Educational Leadership	3	4

Changes to Curriculum

WGU publishes an Institutional Catalog, which describes the academic requirements of each degree program. Although students are required to complete the program version current at the time of their enrollment, WGU may modify requirements and course offerings within that version of the program to maintain the currency and relevance of WGU's competencies and programs. As these changes are implemented, WGU will ensure that the length of the student's degree program (i.e., total competency unit requirements) will not increase and that competency units already earned will be applied to the updated program version. When program requirements are updated, students returning from term break or returning after withdrawal from the university will be expected to re-enter the updated version of the program.

Areas of Study for Master of Science, Educational Leadership

The following section includes the areas of study in the program, with their associated courses. Your specific learning resources and level of instructional support will vary based on the individual competencies you bring to the program and your confidence in developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities required in each area of the degree. The Degree Plan and learning resources are dynamic, so you need to review your Degree Plan and seek the advice of your mentor regarding the resources before you purchase them.

Educational Leadership

Governance, Finance, Law, and Leadership for Principals

This subdomain contains content in educational law, finance, and administration as well as a case study review of your site's leadership practices.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The graduate applies in practice knowledge of procedures for the operation of school organizations in compliance with legal and fiscal guidelines.*
- *The graduate analyzes theories of organizational behavior and management.*
- *The graduate evaluates methods employed by leadership in a PK–12 educational institution to communicate with school faculty and staff.*
- *The graduate analyzes and evaluates techniques used by leadership in a PK–12 educational institution to guide and sustain the school organization.*
- *The graduate synthesizes a leadership approach that includes self-awareness, a reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior.*
- *The graduate evaluates the ethics of a PK–12 school's governance system's operations.*
- *The graduate evaluates the effectiveness of school leaders to ensure social justice and safeguard student diversity.*
- *The graduate develops a philosophy of the principal's role as one of instructional team leadership, and effectively acts in this role.*

Performance Excellence Criteria for Educational Leaders

This subdomain reviews the case study model and prepares you to complete a thorough review of the effectiveness of their case study site's operations, outcomes, and leadership.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The graduate evaluates a PK–12 educational institution's key governance and leadership results and outcomes.*
- *The graduate investigates the influences and challenges faced in a PK–12 institution.*
- *The graduate describes the roles of stakeholders of a PK–12 educational institution and their effect on the organization's operations.*
- *The graduate analyzes a PK–12 educational institution's key student learning results and outcomes.*
- *The graduate performs an environmental scan of an educational organization's operations and structure.*

Strategic Planning for Educational Leaders

This subdomain reviews principles and practices of the strategic planning process as well as a case study review of the strategic planning processes in your case study site.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The graduate analyzes how a PK–12 school utilizes strategic planning to address strategic challenges and enhance its advantages.*
- *The graduate analyzes how a school organization converts objectives into executable action plans.*
- *The graduate identifies strategic challenges and advantages.*
- *The graduate evaluates the performance of a PK–12 school's action plan.*
- *The graduate assesses how future performance of a school organization's action plan will be impacted by current decisions and actions.*

Student, Stakeholder, and Market Focus for Educational Leaders

This subdomain reviews principles and practices of meeting stakeholder needs and reviews your case study site's effectiveness in managing stakeholder relationships.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The graduate establishes an effective public relations plan in an educational institution, and is able to effectively plan for public interaction in this leadership role.*
- *The graduate describes how a PK–12 school organization determines needs and maintains relationships with students, stakeholders, and markets to ensure the continuing relevance of educational programs, offerings, and services.*
- *The graduate assesses the influence of the greater social, political, economic, legal, and cultural contexts and environments on school organizations.*
- *The graduate applies fundamental principles of curriculum design and assessment to develop learner statements and power standards in response to data-driven school improvement initiatives.*
- *The graduate analyzes and acts upon knowledge of how a PK–12 school organization can increase student and stakeholder loyalty and satisfaction.*
- *The graduate designs a leadership strategy that utilizes school resources to advocate for students and caregivers.*
- *The graduate develops appropriate techniques for written and oral communication with an educational organization's stakeholder groups.*
- *The graduate proposes an approach to influence local, state, and national policy decisions from the perspective of a school leader.*
- *The graduate evaluates the assessment of emerging trends and initiatives from a school leader to consider the impact on leadership strategies.*

Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management for Educational Leaders

This subdomain reviews principles and practices of program and curriculum effectiveness evaluation as well as best practices in technology for educational leaders. You also complete a program, practice, or curriculum effectiveness evaluation in your case study site as well as an evaluation of technology implementation.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The graduate executes a "Plan, Do, Study, Act" model of effectiveness evaluation.*
- *The graduate describes how a PK–12 school measures, analyzes, aligns, reviews, and improves student and operational performance through the use of data and information at all levels.*
- *The graduate plans an effectiveness evaluation in a school organization.*
- *The graduate evaluates how a PK–12 school organization ensures the quality and availability of needed data, information, software, and hardware for all stakeholders.*
- *The graduate examines how a PK–12 school organization manages its knowledge assets.*

- *The graduate assesses how a PK–12 school systematically uses the results of reviews to evaluate and improve processes.*

Workforce Focus for Educational Leaders

This subdomain reviews best practices in human resource administration for educational leaders, as well as an evaluation of your case study site's workforce management practices.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The graduate examines how a PK–12 school organization engages, compensates, and rewards faculty and staff to encourage them to achieve high performance.*
- *The graduate investigates how a PK–12 school organization manages workforce capability and capacity to accomplish the work of the organization.*
- *The graduate examines how a PK–12 school organization assesses workforce engagement and uses the results to achieve higher performance.*
- *The graduate summarizes how a PK–12 school organization maintains a safe, secure, and supportive work climate.*
- *The graduate examines how the leadership of a PK–12 school organization develops professional development programs to achieve high performance.*
- *The graduate assesses the impact of legal, legislative, and labor issues on personnel management practices in public and private schools.*

Process Management for Educational Leaders

This subdomain reviews best practices in process management for educational leaders, as well as an evaluation of your case study site's process management policies and practices.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The graduate examines how a PK–12 school organization plans for organizational success and sustainability.*
- *The graduate evaluates how a PK–12 school organization implements, manages, and improves its key work processes to deliver student and stakeholder value.*
- *The graduate investigates how a PK–12 school organization designs its work systems and key processes.*
- *The graduate investigates the core competencies of an educational organization.*
- *The graduate evaluates the use of decision-making process management models in educational organizations.*

Comprehensive Educational Leadership Integration

You will complete a comprehensive objective proctored assessment in Educational Leadership theory and practices, including administrative theory, school law, school finance, curriculum development and implementation, personnel management, public relations, and technology. You will be required to pass the Comprehensive Educational Leadership Integration objective assessment.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The graduate establishes an effective public relations plan in an educational institution, and is able to effectively plan for public interaction in this leadership role.*
- *The graduate applies in practice knowledge of procedures for the operation of school organizations in compliance with legal and fiscal guidelines.*
- *The graduate analyzes theories of organizational behavior and management.*
- *The graduate assesses the influence of the greater social, political, economic, legal, and cultural contexts and environments on school organizations.*

- *The graduate examines how a PK–12 school organization engages, compensates, and rewards faculty and staff to encourage them to achieve high performance.*
- *The graduate applies fundamental principles of curriculum design and assessment to develop learner statements and power standards in response to data-driven school improvement initiatives.*
- *The graduate examines how a PK–12 school organization assesses workforce engagement and uses the results to achieve higher performance.*
- *The graduate plans an effectiveness evaluation in a school organization.*
- *The graduate develops appropriate techniques for written and oral communication with an educational organization's stakeholder groups.*
- *The graduate examines how the leadership of a PK–12 school organization develops professional development programs to achieve high performance.*
- *The graduate assesses the impact of legal, legislative, and labor issues on personnel management practices in public and private schools.*
- *The graduate evaluates the use of decision-making process management models in educational organizations.*
- *The graduate develops a philosophy of the principal's role as one of instructional team leadership, and effectively acts in this role.*

Practicum in Educational Leadership

Foundational Perspectives of Education includes a series of performance tasks to take place under the leadership of a practicing state licensed school principal or assistant principal in a practicum school site (K–12). This assessment also includes completion of assigned administrative duties to take place in both elementary (K–6) and secondary (7–12) settings under the leadership and supervision of the cooperating administrator in your case study school site. Practicum requirements vary by state of intended licensure and WGU program requirements, and the standard has been set between 275 and 540 of logged practicum activities that span a minimum of six consecutive months. Please refer back to the WGU Student Handbook for reference of your program requirements. You are required to pass the Practicum in Educational Leadership performance assessments and successfully submit other documentation, including evaluations of your performance completed by the cooperating administrator and documentation of completion of state-required hours of assigned administrative duties. The Educational Leadership Practicum requires a practicum fee. During the Educational Leadership Practicum, you are also expected to take and pass your state's licensure examination(s) required for certification as a school principal and the PRAXIS 5411 Educational Leadership: Administration and Supervision exam.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The graduate conducts action research to support improvement of a PK–12 school organization's key performance processes and outcomes.*
- *The graduate selects and utilizes appropriate technology tools in carrying out the responsibilities of instructional team leadership.*
- *The graduate observes and evaluates faculty and staff performance.*
- *The graduate conducts a curricular gap analysis as a data-driven school improvement measure.*
- *The graduate plans for engagement and involvement of community stakeholders and district personnel.*
- *The graduate plans for and implements meaningful and relevant professional development for instructional staff.*
- *The graduate relates a personal style of instructional team leadership to student achievement and school operations.*

Capstone

Capstone Written Project in Educational Leadership

The capstone project will consist of the design and implementation of a short-term data-driven school improvement initiative.

Through the case study approach and during the capstone experience, you will identify one or more measurable outcome improvement areas in your case study / practicum site. You will propose and develop short-term school improvement initiatives and will then measure the outcomes and results of your implemented improvement initiatives.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The graduate integrates and synthesizes competencies from across the degree program and thereby demonstrates the ability to participate in and contribute value to the chosen professional field.*

Need More Information? WGU Student Services

WGU's Student Services team is dedicated exclusively to helping you achieve your academic goals. The Student Services office is available during extended hours to assist with general questions and administrative or accessibility issues. The Student Services team members help you resolve issues, listen to student issues and concerns, and make recommendations for improving policy and practice based on student feedback. The Student Services team provides a formal means by which you can express your views, which in turn will inform the decisions we make.

Student Services team members also assist with unresolved concerns to find equitable resolutions. To contact the Student Services team, please feel free to call 877-435-7948 or e-mail studentservices@wgu.edu. We are available Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., mountain standard time. Closed Sundays.

If you have inquiries or concerns that require technical support, please contact the WGU IT Service Desk. The IT Service Desk is available Monday through Friday, 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., mountain standard time. To contact the IT Service Desk, please call 1-877-HELP-WGU (877-435-7948) or e-mail servicedesk@wgu.edu. The support teams are generally closed in observance of university holidays.

For the most current information regarding WGU support services, please visit "Student Support" on the Student Portal at <http://my.wgu.edu>.